

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 1.11.2015 addressed by **Selvi J Jayalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:

“As you are aware, I had written to you on 22.09.2015, 25.09.2015, 30.09.2015, 02.10.2015, 11.10.2015, 13.10.2015 and 14.10.2015 regarding the pathetic plight of 86 fishermen from Tamil Nadu who have been incarcerated in Sri Lankan jails, and their boats impounded by the Sri Lankan authorities. I had requested you to take steps for the immediate release of the fishermen, along with their boats, and had emphasized the need for the Government of India to find a permanent solution to this long pending and vexatious issue. The Members of Parliament from Tamil Nadu had also met the Union Minister for External Affairs on 26.10.2015 and presented the letters written by me conveying the concerns of my Government on this issue.

In response to my request, the Ministry of External Affairs informed the Government of Tamil Nadu on 24.10.2015 that the Government of Sri Lanka had expressed its readiness for the simultaneous release of fishermen in custody on both sides. Accordingly, I had instructed that the two Sri Lankan fishermen in custody in Tamil Nadu be released. However, before the 86 fishermen could actually be released, 34 fishermen from Tamil Nadu, along with 7 boats, were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in two separate incidents. The officers of my Government have been in constant touch with the officials of the Ministry of External Affairs and they have been informed that all the fishermen from Tamil Nadu would soon reach home after fulfilling the required formalities.

Even as the fishermen of Tamil Nadu are eagerly awaiting the arrival of their brethren, in yet another incident, 6 more fishermen, along with their mechanized fishing boat from Tamil Nadu who set out for fishing from the Rameswaram fishing base in Ramanathapuram District, have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the late hours of 31.10.2015 and they have been taken to Talaimannar, Sri Lanka.

I have repeatedly and emphatically brought to your notice Tamil Nadu's consistent stance about the unconstitutionality of the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreements of 1974 and 1976 and the ceding of the Katchatheevu islet, which is the root cause of the problem.

Our fishermen are being denied the right to peaceful fishing in the traditional waters of the Palk Bay to which they have a historical claim.

I have already brought to your notice the damage that fishing boats and fishing gear suffer due to prolonged disuse while they are impounded by the Sri Lankan authorities which has a severe adverse impact on the livelihood of fishermen of Tamil Nadu. I also seek early sanction of the comprehensive special package for deep sea fishing and infrastructure at a cost of Rs.1520 crores and the recurring grant of Rs.10 crores per annum for maintenance dredging, which I had requested as part of the Memorandum presented to you on 3.6.2014 and 7.8.2015.

This livelihood issue of thousands of our fisherfolk needs your personal intervention. I hope that you would take concerted steps to ensure the release of all the Tamil Nadu fishermen and their boats now in Sri Lankan custody in the next few days. I also request you to intervene at the highest political level to bring about a lasting solution to this long pending vexatious problem involving the lives and livelihood of hundreds of thousands of Tamil Nadu fishermen."

Issued by: Director of Information and Public Relations, Chennai – 9
Dated: 1.11.2015